MONTANA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION 1971-1972

GENERAL GOVERNMENT

AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT COMMITTEE PROPOSAL

ON CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

Date Reported: February 12, 1972

, Chairman

, Vice Chairman

Date: February 12, 1972

To: MONTANA CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

From: Ceneral Government and Constitutional Amendment Committee

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The General Government and Constitutional Amendment Committee submits herewith a proposed Constitutional Revision Article. The proposed Article is intended to replace all sections of the present constitution dealing with constitutional revision.

The Committee addressed itself to the basic problems concerning constitutional revision. The Committee worked with the basic purpose of making a fundamental yet flexible document. In doing so, the Committee gave careful consideration to several citizen and delegate proposals. Our end product is composed of a majority report. In signing this report, a Committee member does not necessarily endorse each and every statement in it.

The Committee utilized the services of the following people:

James Grady (Research Analyst), Bobbie Murphy (Secretary) and

Robert Skaggs (Intern).

Mark Etchast, Chairman

Mark Etchast, Chairman

Paul K Harlow Vice Chairma

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MAJORITY PROPOSAL

BE IT PROPOSED BY THE GENERAL GOVERNMENT AND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT COMMITTEE:

That there be a new Article on Constitutional Revision to read as follows:

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ARTICLE

CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION

Section 1. CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION. (1) The legislature, by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members, may at any time submit to the electors of the state the question of whether there shall be an unlimited convention to revise, alter, or amend this constitution.

(2) The people may by initiative petition request the legislative assembly to submit to the voters of the state the question of whether there shall be an unlimited convention to revise, alter, or amend this constitution. The petition must be signed by at least ten percent of the legal voters of the state, which shall include at least ten percent of the legal voters in two-fifths of the legislative representative districts of the state.

The petition shall be filed with the Secretary of State, who shall certify the filing thereof to the legislative assembly and cause the question to be submitted to the voters at the general election immediately following the legislative session receiving notice of the filing of said petition.

(3) If the question of holding a convention is not otherwise submitted to the people at some time during any period of 20 years, it shall be submitted at the general election in the twentieth year following the

last submission of such question.

- (4) The legislature, prior to a popular vote on the holding of a convention, shall provide for a preparatory commission to assemble information on constitutional questions, to assist the voters, and, if a convention is authorized, continued for the assistance of the delegates.
- shall declare in favor of such convention, the legislative assembly shall at its next session provide for the calling thereof. The number of members of the convention shall be the same as the largest body of the legislative assembly. The legislature may determine whether the delegates shall be elected after nomination by political parties, or on a non-partisan basis, but they shall be elected at the same places and in the same districts as the legislative body determining the number of delegates.
- (6) The legislative assembly shall, in the act calling the convention, designate the day, hour and place of its meeting, fix the pay of its members and officers, and provide for the payment of the same, together with the necessary expenses of the convention.
- (7) Before proceeding, the members shall take the oath otherwise provided in this constitution. The qualifications of members shall be the same as the highest qualifications required for membership in the legislature. Vacancies occurring shall be filled in the manner provided for filling vacancies in the legislative assembly, or as otherwise provided by law.
- (8) The convention shall meet within three months after the election of the delegates and prepare such

revisions, alterations or amendments to the constitution as may be deemed necessary, which shall be submitted to the electors for their ratification or rejection as a whole or in separate articles or amendments as determined by the convention and at an election appointed by the convention for that purpose, or at the next general election, but not less than two months after the adjournment thereof. Unless so submitted and approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon, no such revision, alteration or amendment shall take effect.

(9) Unless otherwise provided, any revision becomes effective on the first day of July after the certification of the election returns by the Secretary of State.

Section 2. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BY THE LEGISLATURE.

Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by any member of the legislative assembly. If adopted by an affirmative roll call vote of two-thirds of all the members thereof, whether one or more bodies, the proposed amendment shall become a part of the constitution when approved by either of the following procedures:

amendment to the voters of the state of Montana to be voted on in the next general election held in the state. In such event the Secretary of State shall cause the amendment or amendments to be published in full in at least one newspaper in each county in which a newspaper is published, twice each month for the two months previous to the next general election for members to the legislative assembly. If approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon, the amendment shall become a part of this

constitution on the first day of July after certification of the election returns unless the amendment otherwise provides; or

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call vote, may elect not to refer the amendment to the vote of the electors of Montana as provided in the preceding sub-section (1) in which event the amendment shall be presented to the next succeeding legislative assembly after a general election. If adopted by a two-thirds vote of the members of such legislative assembly, the amendment shall become a part of this constitution on the first day of July following its approval unless a petition is filed with the Secretary of State signed by five percent of the legal voters of the state requesting such amendment be referred to a vote of the people as provided in this Constitution for referendum, in which event the amendment shall not become effective until the Secretary of State certifies its approval by a majority of those voting thereon.

Section 3. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BY INITIATIVE.

The people of Montana may also propose constitutional amendments by initiative process. Petitions shall include the full text of the proposed amendment and shall be signed by not less than 15 percent of the legal voters in Montana, which shall include at least 15 percent of the legal voters in two-fifths of the legislative representative districts of Montana. The petitions shall be filed with the Secretary of State, who shall cause the same to be checked and certified as to the validity of the signatures thereon and, if found to be signed by the required number of voters, cause the same to be published

in full in at least one newspaper in each county (if such there be) twice each month for two months previous to the next regular state-wide election, at which time the proposed amendment shall be voted on.

At said election the proposed amendment shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the state for their approval or rejection. If approved by a majority voting thereon it shall become a part of the constitution effective the first day of July following its approval, unless otherwise provided in the amendment.

Section 4. LEGAL VOTERS. The number of votes cast for the office of Governor in the general election immediately preceding the filing of the petition shall determine the number of legal voters.

Section 5. SUBMISSION. Should more amendments than one be submitted at the same election, they shall be so prepared and distinguished by numbers or otherwise that each can be voted upon separately.

Section 6. GUBERNATORIAL VETO. The veto power of the Governor shall not extend to proposed constitutional revisions or amendments.

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Paul K. Marlow, Vice Chairman

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COMMENTS OF MAJORITY PROPOSAL

section 1. (1) The legislature, by an affirmative of the of two-thirds of all the members, may at any time submit to the electors of the state the question of whether there shall be an unlinited convention to revise, after, or amond this constitution.

(2) The people may by initiative petition request the legislative assembly to submit to the voters of the state the question of whether there shall be an unlimited convention to revise, alter, or amend this constitution. The petition must be signed by at least ten percent of the legal voters of the state, which shall include at least ten percent of the legal voters in two-fifths of the legislative representative districts of the state.

The petition shall be filed with the Secretary of State, who shall certify the filing thereof to the legislative assembly and cause the question to be submitted to the voters at the general cirction immediately following the legislative asssion remiving notice of the filing of soil petition.

- (8) If the question of he ling a convention is not atheroise submitted to the people at some time during any period of teenty years, it shall be submitted at the general election in the twentieth year feilering the last sub-mission of such question.
- (4) In legislature, this is to a spain vote on the holding of a convention, shall provide for a preparatory commission to resemble information on constitutional resetting, to recist the viter, one, if a convention is with risely continued for the view restation of the velocates.

- shall declare in favor of such convention, the legislative assembly shall at its next session provide for the calling thereof. The number of members of the convention shall be the same as the largest body of the legislative assembly. The legislature may determine whether the delegates shall be elected after nomination by political parties, or on a non-partisan basis, but they shall be elected at the same places and in the same districts as the legislative body determining the number of delegates.
- (6) The legislative assembly shall, in the act calling the convention, designate the day, hour and place of its meeting, fix the pay of its members and officers, and provide for the payment of the same, together with the necessary expenses of the convention.
- (7) Before proceeding, the members shall take the oath otherwise provided in this constitution. The qualifications of members shall be the same as the highest qualifications required for membership in the legislature. Vacancies occurring shall be filled in the manner provided for filling vacancies in the legislative assembly, or as otherwise provided by law.
- (8) The convention shall meet within three months after the election of the delegates and prepare such revisions, alterations or amendments to the constitution as may be deemed necessary, which shall be submitted to the electors for their ratification or rejection as a whole or in separate articles or amendments as determined by the convention and at an election appointed by the convention for that purpose, or at the next general election, but

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not less than two months after the adjournment thereof. Unless so submitted and approved by a majority of the electors ofting there in, no such revision, alteration or amendment shall take offest.

- (9) Unless thermise provided, any revision becomes effective on the first day of July after the certification of the election returns by the Secretary of State.
 - Sec. 1. (1) The legislature, by an affirmative vote of two-thirds of all the members, may at any time submit to the electors of the state the question of whether there shall be an unlimited convention to revise, alter, or amend this constitution.

This subsection is identical to the first part of Article XIX, Section 8 of the present constitution. The Committee feels that given the additional provisions of the proposed article on constitutional revision, this portion of the proposed article is adequate.

Sec. 1. (2) The people may by initiative petition request the legislative assembly to submit to the voters of the state the question of whether there shall be an unlimited convention to revise. alter, or amend this constitution. The petition must be signed by at least ten percent of the legal voters of the state, which shall include at least ten percent of the legal voters in two-fifths of the legislative

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representative districts of the state

The petition shall be filed with the Secretary of State, who shall certify the filing thereof to the legislative assembly and cause the question to be submitted to the voters at the general election immediately following the legislative session receiving notice of the filing of said petition.

The people of Montana do not now have the power to call a constitutional convention by the initiative. The Committee feels that this is a basic political right of the people under a government like Montana's. The Committee set the petition qualification, at ten percent of the legal voters of the state, with the additional qualification that at least ten percent of the legal voters of the state in two-fifths of the legislative representative districts of the state be included in that percentage, because it feels such a number is high enough to prevent frivolous attempts at constitutional change and yet low enough to insure citizen constitutional control. The division of the percentage of petitioners by legislative representative districts helps insure a somewhat diversified body of petitioners on a successful petition without violating the principle of one-man, one-vote. It should be noted that this provision (and all subsequent provisions) in its phrase "legislative assembly" allows the provision to keep its intent and internal integrity in either a bicameral or unicameral situation.

Sec. 1 (3) If the question of holding a convention is not otherwise submitted to the people at some time during any period of twenty years, it shall be submitted at the general election in the twentieth year following the last submission of such question.

Subsection 3 of Section 1 is a further guarantee that the people will retain a firm hold on the power of constituting government. This provision calls for the consideration of a constitutional convention at least once every 20 years. The Committee feels periodic consideration strengthens rather than weakens a constitution and a government, as it builds into the constitution recognition of and a remedy for changing times. While there is no magic number that precisely delineates the different constitutional periods, the Committee feels on the average it would take at least 20 years for political changes and their relationship to the constitution to be clear. A shorter period of time may subject the constitution to changes based more on short term whimsy than considered need. A longer period may breed dangerous stagnation into the body politic.

Sec. 1. (4) The legislature, prior to a popular vote on the holding of a convention, shall provide for a preparatory commission to assemble information on constitutional questions, to assist the voters, and, if a convention is authorized, continued for the assistance of the delegates.

Subsection 4 of Section 1 was added by the Committee on the basis of their experience at the convention. The Committee believes that without preparatory work, any constitutional convention would be traversing troubled waters in a flimsy craft.

Sec. 1. (5) If a majority of those voting on the question shall declare in favor of such convention, the legislative assembly shall at its next session provide for the calling thereof. The number of members of the convention shall be the same as the largest body of the legislative assembly. The legislature may determine whether the delegates shall be elected after nomination by political parties, or on a non-partisan basis, but they shall be elected at the same places and in the same districts as the legislative body determining the number of delegates.

Subsection 5 of Section 1 mandates the legislative assembly to provide for the calling of the convention, and to some degree dictates the manner in which the convention shall be called and <u>initially</u> organized. The Committee feels this is necessary, as without some clear directions, the convention though scheduled and called, could be bogged down before it ever gets off the ground.

The Committee heard testimony on several delegate proposals (See Appendix B) calling for determination of the political complexion of any future convention. The Committee

after careful consideration, feels the present constitution should not make such a determination. The political climate of Montana and indeed the whole country is such that the problems of partisanship and political parties as we know them today may be quaint historical anachronism tomorrow. If, in 2052 (80 years hence), another constitutional convention is called and the Montana polity is characterized by town meeting type councils, then partisan provisions would be wholly inapplicable. If the constitution contains partisan provisions, there is also the danger that future electorates may be vexed and irritated by those provisions as many of the Montana electorate were at the mandated partisan nature of this convention.

Sec. 1. (6) The legislative assembly shall, in the act calling the convention, designate the day, hour and place of its meeting, fix the pay of its members and officers, and provide for the payment of the same, together with the necessary expenses of the convention.

Subsection 6 was designed by the Committee as a protection device for future constitutional conventions. Throughout history (noteably in the Western European tradition) obstreporous and unresponsive representative bodies had thwarted the will of their constitutients by tokenism. The legislature may call a convention, or it may be confronted with the <u>fait accompli</u>, through initiative, but it could frustrate popular will by witholding the necessary materials and funds, thus destroying the convention's ability to do anything.

take the cute of raise provided in this constitution. The publifications of members shall be the same as the highest qualifications required for membership in the legislature. Vacancies occurring shall be filled in the same provided for filling vacances in the legislative assembly, or an otherwise provided by law.

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Subsection 7 was designed by the Committee to help insure continuity of the convention itself. Again, the Committee feels such measures are lacess ratio assist future conventions in their task, and that such assistance should be provided in the constitution.

Sec. 1. (8) The convention shall meet within thremonths after the election of the delegates and prepare such remisions, alterations or amendments to the constitution as may be deemed necessary, which shall be submitted to the electors for their ratification or rejection as a whole or in separate articles or amendments as determined by the convention for that purpose, or at the next general election, but not less than two months after the adjournment thereof. Unless so submitted and approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon, no such revision, alteration or amendment shall take effect.

Subsection 8 was also designed to help structure

future conventions, but as with other sections, the structuring is flexible enough to allow for changing conditions.

Sec. 1. (9) Unless otherwise provided, any revision becomes effective on the first day of July after the certification of the election returns by the Secretary of State.

Subsection 9 allows the convention to provide for its own adoption schedule, and it also provides a general guide-line and a schedule should some revision not be scheduled by the convention.

Section 2. CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT. Amendments to this constitution may be proposed by any member of the legislative assembly. If adopted by an affirmative roll call vote of two-thirds of all the members thereof, whether one or more bodies, the proposed amendment shall become a part of the constitution when approved by either of the following procedures:

amendment to the voters of the state of Montana to be voted on in the next general election held in the state. In such event the Secretary of State shall cause the amendment or amendments to be published in full in at least one newspaper in each county in which a newspaper is published, twice each month for the two months previous to the next general election for members to the legislative assembly. If approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon, the amendment shall become a part of this constitution on the first day of July after certification of the election returns unless the amendment otherwise provides; or

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The introductory paragraph to this section establishes one method by which constitutional amending may be commenced. It is important to note that two-thirds of the members of the total membership of the legislative assembly is required to begin the amending process. This means that in a bicameral situation with 20 members in the upper house and 40 members in the lower house, a vote of the lower house would be sufficient to begin on the vote of 20 members of the upper house and 10 members of the lower house, or any 2/3 mixture of the membership.

The Committee feels such a measure is restrictive enough to prevent frivolous legislative action, yet is open enough to overcome stringent opposition of a few well-placed members of one bicameral house. If the provision were 2/3 of the members of both houses in our hypothetical

legislature 7 members of the upper house could thwart the wishes of their 53 fellow legislators. In that situation, the plurality of elected officials necessary to achieve a legislatively originated constitution amendment is 90 percent or 9/10 rather than 2/3.

To facilitate flexibility, the Committee has provided for two proposed methods of constitutional amendment by the legislature. The first procedure (outlined in subsection 1 of Section 2) is analagous to the method of amending the constitution in the present constitution's Article XIX, Section 9. The proposed section, however, does not go into the cumbersome procedural detail contained in the present constitution. This cumbersome detail has been a burden to often-popular constitutional change. In one instance the Supreme Court of Montana voided a proposed constitutional amendment for the slight procedural irregularity of failure to follow the constitutional directive in Article XIX, Section 9 and enter the proposed amendment in full in the journals of both houses [Dufree, v. Harper, 22 Mont. 354 (1899)]

Subsection 2 of Section 2 provides for a new method of constitutional amendment. After the legislature has once passed a proposed amendment by the required 2/3 vote, it is referred to the next legislative assembly. If the proposed amendment again passes the assembly by the necessary 2/3 vote, the amendment takes effect on the specified day. The people have a check on this process, as they can, with a petition from five percent of the voters, cause such an amendment to be directly voted on by the people. The small percentage of required petitioners makes this

check on legislative abuse extremely viable.

One of the bigger assets of this new method of constitutional amendment is economy. Legislative action is much cheaper than popular action when the cost of an election is compared with the cost of a fairly routine legislative function, the passage of a bill. Yet the state does not lose careful consideration to economic benefit. The people, in addition to the explicit check of petition previously discussed, have the check of making their views known in the time span between legislative sessions.

They also have the opportunity to choose those who make the final decision after the substance of the decision has been stated.

Section 3. The people of Montana may also propose constitutional amendments by initiative process. Petitions shall include the full text of the proposed amendment and shall be signed by not less than 15 percent of the legal voters in Montana, which shall include at least 15 percent of the legal voters in two-fifths of the legislative representative districts of Montana. The petitions shall be filed with the Secretary of State, who shall cause the same to be checked and certified as to the validity of the signatures thereon and, if found to be signed by the required number of voters, cause the same to be published in full in at least one newspaper in each county (if such there be) twice each month for two months previous to the next regular state-wide election, at which time the proposed amendment shall be voted on.

At said election the proposed amendment shall be submitted to the qualified electors of the state for their

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approval or rejection. If approved by a majority voting thereon it shall become a part of the constitution effective the first day of July following its approval, unless otherwise provided in the amendment.

Section 3 of the proposed article creates a new power for the people of Montana, the right to initiate constitutional amendments. The Committee feels this is an inherent right in a body politic whose constitution is to be the embodiment of the will of the people. The Committee's proposal sets up the exact machinery for expressing this will through establishment of the petition requirements and the administration process. The 15 percent petition requirement and the geographical requirement are high, but the Committee feels it is not unreasonable to demand strict standards when dealing with something as fundamental and important as constitutional change. Although the standard is high, the Committee does not feel it is so high that pressing popular and needed constitutional reforms could not be initiated by the people. The standard, the Committee feels, will operate to check erratic whimsy.

Section 4. The number of votes cast for the office of Governor in the general election immediately preceding the filing of the petition shall determine the number of legal voters.

Section 4 of the Article is merely an administrative and technical section in that it defines the number of legal voters for computation of the petition requirements. It does not and cannot be used to infringe and inhibit the initiative and referendum processes through technical circumvention. Indeed, this Section, by setting up such

a standard, guards against such abuses.

Section 5. Should more amendments than one be submitted at the same election, they shall be so prepared
and distinguished by number or otherwise that cash can be
voted upon separately.

Section 5 is designed to aid voters in casting their votes on constitutional issues, and as a check on the posible action of grouping several issues under one innocuous title.

Section 6. The veto power of the Governor shall not extend to proposed constitutional revisions or amendments.

The Committee feels that one man, the Governor, should not have the power to override proposed constitutional measures when the requirements for proposing those measures are as stringent as this article creates.

* * *

The proposed articles on constitutional revision are lengthy and at times somewhat detailed. However, the Committee feels this necessary. This is the article that to a large degree determines whether this constitution, and through it the state, will be flexible or frozen, responsive or rigid, basic or erratic. In order to hit a happy and workable medium in the dilemna of those determinations, the process for control and change of a constitution must be clear. This clarity can be thwarted by a two-edged sword: On the one hand, there must be enough detail to spell out procedure and readily accomplish desired ends. On the other hand the detail must not proliferate and degenerate into entrapping trivia that obscures and thwarts the desired end. The Committee feels this proposed article

I solves the problem.

APPENDIX A

CROSS REFERENCES

Proposed Section	Present Article & Section
1	XIX, 8, with revision
2	XIX, 9, with revision
3	None
<i>L</i>	None
5	None
6	None

, APPENDIX B

PROPOSALS CONSIDERED BY COMMITTEE

The fo	ollowing	delegate	proposals	were	examined	and
considered	by the				con	mmittee
during its	delibera	ations:				

	Number of proposal	Chief Sponsor	Subject Matter and Disposition
1.	27	Mahoney	This proposal established procedures for legislative and initiative constitutional amendments, and prohibited gubernatorial veto on constitutional revisions. It was revised and incorporated in Section 2 of the proposed article.
2.	52	Warden	This proposal dictated nonpartisan elections for future constitutional conventions. It was revised and covered in Section 1 of the Committee proposal.
3.	58	Harbaugh	This proposal called for periodic consideration of constitutional conventions, and was revised and incorporated in Section 1.
4.	94	Habedank	A revisal of this proposal comprises the Committee report.
5.	106	Arbanas	This proposal deals with the constitutional convention process, and as such was revised and covered in the Committee report.

APPENDIX C

WITNESSES HEARD BY COMMITTEE

Name - Affiliation - Residence - Subject

 Duane Welker - private citizen - Hamilton, Mont. Constitutional revision, imposition of limitation on future actions

Note: This list does not include delegates who spoke in fayor of their particular proposal

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